

Washington, DC - This afternoon, Congressman Charles Gonzalez will deliver remarks on the House floor to demonstrate his support for the bipartisan Skelton-Lantos-Jones (NC) resolution. The resolution, which showcases strong support for our troops while opposing the President's plan to escalate the war in Iraq, is scheduled for a full vote by the United States House of Representatives on Friday, February 16th, 2007.

Below is an embargoed copy of Congressman Gonzalez's remarks, as prepared and for delivery: ☐☐

This resolution is about duty and responsibility - the duty and responsibility that Congress owes to our men and women in uniform.

Our first duty is to make wise and educated choices in identifying a threat, the necessity of action, and the legitimacy of the goal before committing or continuing to commit more of our troops to the war.

When considering this resolution, which reflects that an escalation of the war is unwarranted and is not in the best interest of our nation and our troops, each of us must ask ourselves - is escalating and continuing the war in Iraq worth fighting and dying for?

As we seek to answer this question, be ever mindful that the courage and bravery of our troops is never questioned. Our soldiers' valor and commitment are not diminished by the errors in judgment made by their civilian leaders. The question is whether the mission in Iraq is worth their sacrifice.

As we move forward with this decision, we must recognize the lessons of history, or we are doomed to repeat its grave mistakes.

One lesson is highlighted here, in a quote that states, "The public has been led into a trap from which it will be hard to escape with dignity and honor. They have been tricked into it

by a steady withholding of information. The Baghdad communiqués are belated, insincere, incomplete. Things have been far worse than we have been told, our administration more bloody and inefficient than the public knows. We are today not far from a disaster."

The parallels are uncanny. That quote is, however, an 86 year old opinion from T.E. Lawrence, better known as Lawrence of Arabia, from August of 1920.

"The situation in Iraq is grave and deteriorating...In addition, there is significant underreporting of violence in Iraq. The standard for recording attacks acts as a filter to keep events out of reports and databases," says the bi-partisan Iraq Study Group, a full 86 years after Lawrence of Arabia's assessment.

In 1992, General Colin Powell said, "The Gulf War was a limited-objective war. If it had not been, we would be ruling Baghdad today at unpardonable expense in terms of money, lives lost, and regional relationships."

And a year prior to General Powell's statement, we heard, "...once you got Baghdad, it's not clear what you do with it. It's not clear what kind of government you would put in place of the one that's there now (Saddam Hussein). Is it going to be a Shia regime, a Sunni regime, or a Kurdish regime? Or one that tilts toward the Baathists or one that tilts toward the Islamic fundamentalists? How much credibility is that government going to have if it's set up by the United States military when it's there? How long does the U.S. military have to stay to protect the people that sign on for that government, and what happens to it once you leave?"

That was then Secretary of Defense, and current Vice President of the United States, Dick Cheney, in 1991.

We remain a good and great nation, but we have done all the good in Iraq that we are going to do. An escalation only delays the day that Iraqis assume the responsibility of setting aside their sectarian differences and embrace the promise of a democracy.

We cannot do this for them, whether we send in 20,000 or 200,000 more troops, and we cannot ignore the lessons of history, the views of military experts, and the will of the American people. It is time for our troops to start coming home, and it's time for the Iraqis to start building a home.

For these reasons I urge my colleagues to join me in support of this resolution.

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